



ALBUQUERQUE DISTRICT CELEBRATES 70 YEARS OF SERVICE TO NEW MEXICO

Story, and photos at top and right by Frank Martin, USACE-Albuquerque District Public Affairs



circa 1939

NM Governor John E. Miles, District Engineer Captain Hans Kramer, and Albert M. Michell, manager of the Bell Ranch looking at plans for the proposed recreation area at Conchas Dam

Located at the confluence of the Canadian and Conchas rivers, Conchas Lake is a 25-mile long expanse of deep blue water in the high desert of eastern New Mexico. A paradise for anglers, boaters, campers, and other outdoor enthusiasts, Conchas Lake began 70 years ago as a controversial water project to address the need for employment and irrigation in the midst of the devastating drought and economic depression of the early 1930's. The towering 235 foot high concrete dam that holds back the clear waters of Conchas lake cost over 12 million dollars to construct. The building of Conchas Dam provided over 3,000 jobs and much needed stimulus for the economy of New Mexico and Texas.

Under the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized funds to begin construction of Conchas Dam on the Canadian River, 35 miles northwest of Tucumcari. The Corps of Engineers reported to the President that the Conchas Dam project did not meet the usual criteria for economic feasibility, but the project would provide many badly needed jobs in New Mexico and Texas.

Operations of the project were originally headquartered in the Memphis District. On August 1, 1935, the Corps created Tucumcari District. A year later it was renamed Conchas District. Thus began the history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in New Mexico.

In passing the Flood Control Act of 1936, Congress authorized the construction of five reservoirs and a variety of other improvements on the Arkansas River basin, including Caddoa (John Martin) Reservoir. In December 1939 the District was renamed Caddoa, most employees were transferred from Tucumcari to the Caddoa District offices near Lamar, Colorado. Caddoa Dam was not finished until 1948 due to WW II.

Senior personnel at the Caddoa offices in Colorado were moved to Albuquerque in early 1942. April 13, 1942 the newly formed Albuquerque District received orders to build an air depot training center in Albuquerque. Military construction became the primary focus of the Albuquerque District for the duration of WW II and until after the Korean conflict. The

Albuquerque District continues to provide engineering and construction services and other support to White Sands, Sandia, and Los Alamos Laboratories, as well as U.S. military bases throughout the Southwest.

Today the Albuquerque District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers performs its mission providing a vast array of engineering services to New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Arizona, and other areas of the Southwest and the World for a variety of clients, both public and private.

Albuquerque District celebrated its 70 years of service, Conchas Dam celebrated its 70th Anniversary, and original Conchas Dam builder, George Dominguez, celebrated 70 years of marriage to his wife Josephine at the 70th Anniversary Celebration at Conchas Dam, August 1.



Workers burrow the upstream face of the irrigation tunnel in 1939



Governor Clyde Tingley and USACE Captain Hans Kramer



Wartime staff at Conchas Dam in 1943



"Water Babies" frolic at Conchas Lake. A camera just adds that much more excitement to their day.



Maintenance and upkeep are among the many tasks performed by Corps of Engineers personnel at the Conchas Lake Project



Safety is paramount as shown here by this young boy wearing his life jacket on a water skiing venture at Conchas Lake.